(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government are also considering to allow LIC to enter into health insurance; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) and (b) The Law Commission in its 190th Report submitted to the Government has recommended merging, amending, re-grouping, re-casting, re-defining, deleting and re-examining of various provisions of the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority (IRDA) Act, 1999 and Insurance Act, 1938. IRDA constituted a Committee of Experts to deliberate upon the report of Law Commission and placed the report of the Committee in the public domain for comments of all stakeholders. IRDA is yet to submit its report to Government.

(c) and (d) The Government has received no proposal from LIC to allow it to enter into Health Insurance.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO UNSTARRED QUESTIONS

Air Service Agreement with Thailand

1471. SHRI ABU ASIM AZMI: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have agreed with Thailand Government for to and fro international flights;

(b) if so, the details of the agreement and the extent to which India shall be beneficiary;

(c) the number of daily flights to and fro;

(d) the details of airports in Uttar Pradesh from where such flights shall operate; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) During the recently held bilateral air services consultation between India and Thailand on 9-10 February, 2006, an MoU has been signed between the two countries.

(b) and (c) As per this MoU, the capacity entitlement for the designated airlines of both sides has been increased to 18671 seats per week in a phased manner upto summer 2009. Besides, the designated airlines of both sides have unlimited access to/from 18 tourist gateways in India.

After this agreement, the Indian as well as Thai scheduled carriers can deploy more additional services on India-Thailand route.

(d) and (e) The designated airlines of both sides have now unlimited access to/form Lucknow and Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh.

Purchase of aircraft by Air India

1472. SHRI KALRAJ MISHRA:
SHRI R.P. GOENKA:

Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Air India has entered into an agreement with the Boeing Commercial Airplanes for purchase of 68 aircraft at an estimated cost of Rs. 35,000 crores;

(b) if so, the details thereof, including the type(s) and distinctive features of the new aircraft, phased programme drawn up for their delivery and arrangements settled, if any, for maintenance, repair and overhauling of the large number of new category of aircraft; and

(c) to what extent the new airplanes are expected to help achieve operational cost savings and expand the route network to combat the increasing competition?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Air India has signed a purchase agreement with Boeing Company for the purchase of 68 aircraft comprising 8XB777-200LR, 15XB777-300ER and 27XB787-8 all powered with GE engines for Air India and 18XB737-800W powered with CFM engines for Air India Charters Limited (a subsidiary of Air India) at an estimated cost of Rs. 34,615 crores.

The distinctive features of each aircraft and its delivery schedule are as under: (i) B777-200LR - A wide body ultra long range aircraft, configured with a 3-class layout having capability to fly non-stop flights from India to North America and will be equipped with the most modern in-flight entertainment system. Delivery of this aircraft will take place from February, 2007 to June, 2009; (ii) B777-300ER-A wide body long range aircraft configured with a 3-class layout, will be equipped with the most modern in-flight entertainment system. Delivery of this aircraft will take place from June, 2007 to August, 2011; (ii) B787-8 This aircraft is scheduled to enter into alirline's service in 2008 with a configuration of 2-class layout and will be equipped with the most modern in-flight entertainment system. Delivery